



# SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

December 9, 2021

## Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Focus: Mobility and Land Use

### Questions and Answers

1. How do we have the schools' great success on bike/ped use for the rest of our community?
  - A. The success of the [Safe Routes to Schools](#) (SRTS) program is the result of a 40-year partnership between the City, the PTA, and the School District. Additionally, the SRTS Partnership bases its efforts on a "6E injury prevention framework" approach based on addressing the engineering, education, encouragement, engagement, equity, and evaluation considerations to support school based active transportation access (active transportation is walking, biking, and transit). This model can be used to support community engagement efforts in a variety of areas, including sustainability. As part of the S/CAP Update, we will explore ways to leverage and expand this program to the broader community.
  
2. Is the City considering expanding protected bike lanes to help people who would like to cycle more feel safer sharing the roads with cars?
  - A. Yes. The update of the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#) will evaluate opportunities to expand the bicycle network, including where protected facilities are appropriate.
  
3. Do we have a plan to make cycling routes as built as full commuting paths and don't require things like getting off and walking bikes through underpasses or over bridges?
  - A. Yes. The [Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#) Update will evaluate opportunities to expand and improve the bicycle network.
  
4. I think that a feeling of safety is one of the biggest barriers to more biking in the city. I have noticed that many big cities that have successfully transitioned to a lot of biking (mostly Europe and Japan) have separated cars and bikes, usually with shared walking/biking paths. I realize that this might be a big investment, but maybe something to work towards?
  - A. We agree. The update of the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan](#) and [Complete Streets Policy](#) will identify opportunities to construct protected bike lanes and intersections to make city streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.

5. Bringing a cargo bike through the California Avenue tunnel is a nightmare. We need paths that are designed for bikes.
  - A. It can be a challenge to meet the changing needs of different and often new bicycle types, including e-bikes, adult trikes, trailers, mid-tail bikes and box bikes. The City will continue to incorporate cargo-bike related feedback into the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan Update](#) to improve facilities for all types of bicyclists to improve access.
  
6. Coaching/counseling can help folks overcome their barriers to engaging in active transportation with help from behavioral science. I've been doing for years and has helped lots plus increases exercise painlessly.
  - A. Thanks for your comment. Agreed that changes in transportation behavior include both infrastructure and non-infrastructure focused efforts, including counseling. Best practice models in Vermont and elsewhere point to transportation related counseling as a useful tool to assist residents in determining what transportation mode best meets their needs. Similar best practice models have been discussed for inclusion in the S/CAP.
  
7. Will the proposed on-demand transit use Electric Vehicles (EVs)? The same as Mobility as a service; will this use EVs?
  - A. Yes. Using EVs, if an appropriate model is available, is integrated into the RFP looking for on-demand transit operators.
  
8. Maybe our hometown EV companies can sponsor the on-demand transportation program with a few Rivians and Teslas.
  - A. It's our understanding that neither company runs an on-demand shuttle service. However, a Request for Proposals will be published in the first half of 2022 and any company offering the services the City is looking for will have the opportunity to make a proposal, including local companies.
  
9. If a goal is to discourage car use and encourage walking and bicycling, why did Palo Alto recently reopen University Avenue?
  - A. The consideration of University Ave reopening had to balance a number of different factors such as traffic flow, transportation policy, and small business impacts. This staff report has some background on the decision:  
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/reports/city-manager-reports-cmrs/2021/id-12302.pdf>.
  
10. Let's assume practical planning is in 3-year segments, i.e., plan, then adjust not less than every 3 years. How can Palo Alto get a practical grasp of Caltrain capacity (key component for VMT goals)? Specifically, how many committed billions are planned to optimize Caltrain during the next 12 years?
  - A. As a city government, we can't speak to the amount of money Caltrain, or any other entity, may spend on its own programs. But we will continue to coordinate with Caltrain for their service planning efforts and have dialogue to understand capacity and trip planning from Palo Alto. As Caltrain is planning increased services with electrification, the City, in conjunction with the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association (Palo Alto TMA) will review and monitor commute usage and will integrate programs for incentivizing greater use of Caltrain.

11. What if living or working in Palo Alto entitled you to a free transit pass (that worked on Caltrain, VTA, right down to scooters and bikes)? Have you modeled what that could look like from an adoption and cost perspective? Could the City's scale help reduce the per-capita cost? Could carbon credits from avoided miles help to subsidize a program?
  - A. The City has not modeled the cost associated with providing free city-wide transit passes to people working or residing in Palo Alto. There are multiple private developments that have implemented Transit Demand Management programs and are offering free transit passes. There are no programs available that offer city-wide free transit passes. However, the [Palo Alto TMA](#) has a free transit pass program for low-income Palo Alto employees. The City's scale may help in reducing the per capita cost of transit, but it also depends on the actual transit usage rate. Carbon credits are a potential tool for encouraging reduction in miles, but the success rate of a carbon credit program depends on the demand for the credits.
  
12. The Work from Anywhere trend necessitated by the pandemic seems to be continuing. Are you considering how this might suggest an adjustment to your expansive plans?
  - A. Yes. Remote work is contemplated in the S/CAP and can be a key component in reducing VMT.
  
13. How might the city support development of a job commute untangle website that provides participants with announcements of better jobs with shorter commutes in their fields? I think lots of folks unknowingly drive past better jobs than the one they are driving to. Can the city support the development of a job opportunity push site that provides notices of similar better job opportunities to people? Someone would enter some info about the type of work they want and where they live. Announcements of better community jobs would arrive in their e-mail.
  - A. We can look into that, while considering what might be "better" for all/anyone, the shifting locations of employers, staff resources, the movement of employees, the role of local government in providing job assistance to its residents, the number of working residents and their careers, the necessary involvement and management of private sector partners, and more.
  
14. Every city along the Caltrain route seems to be making availability assumptions for commuters at peak load time. As land use density, parking lite, etc. are implemented, then what assumptions are being made about long haul versus short haul Caltrain riders? Would it be reasonable to assume that long haul rider demand such as SF>Sunnyvale (or SF>SJ) will be displaced for short hauls riders (i.e., greater volume and shorter commutes)? This seems like a recipe for a subway pattern as opposed to "longer" haul riders. Who worries about this stuff? My comment is a demand question. Based on my life in NYC (long time ago), my theory is that Caltrain riders will evolve from long haul riders to shorter haul riders who basically bump off the long haul rider. I.e., more riders per seat during the peak commutes. Nobody may think this will occur. My concern is modelling the possibility. TMT would be like VMT. Rail miles traveled seems highly probable to me for this region...sort of a hop on and hop off phenomena. Who knows. NYC subways are very different than the long rail runs to Long Island and Westchester County/CT. Caltrain seems like a long-term subway to me.
  - A. It is uncertain whether long-haul Caltrain ridership will be displaced by short haul trips. Caltrain and other transit providers are the most directly involved with collecting data regarding trip origin. Caltrain is working to increase their frequency and capacity.

15. Wouldn't the closing Churchill Ave. option be the best choice for S/CAP, and the COMP plan? Is this in the calculations for the various options?
- A. Each alternative developed for grade separation for Churchill Avenue has its advantages and disadvantages that relate to sustainability. Each alternative can improve sustainability in various ways. The sustainability evaluation, which will review project elements supporting sustainability measures that can be incorporated for the construction of that alternative, will be performed in the subsequent phases of project development for the selected alternative.
16. What consumer research have you done to understand which groups want to live in high-density housing and give up access to car mobility? Have you looked into car sharing, public transportation?
- A. City staff have not undertaken a research project aimed at determining which residents want to live in certain housing and release access to a car. Certainly, attitudes to both housing and transportation change depending on multiple variables, including personal circumstances at any given time. We know that higher density housing and decreased car access do not have to be synonymous; this depends, in part, on the required vehicle parking associated with different types of housing. Car sharing can be a great way to provide access to cars at a cheaper rate than owning a car. Likewise access to public transit can help increase use of transit—and lead to greater investments in transit. The City has publicly noted the benefits of public transportation and car sharing.
17. What research have you done to know who wants to live in tiny spaces in high rise housing blocks? Including customer segmentation analysis and listening to actual people will be very important.
- A. As part of developing housing policies and programs, it is possible to do both market research and direct outreach. There are also many sources of information about who does and doesn't currently live in a community and the types of housing features they would use. Developers and economic consultants, for example, track the ever-changing cost per square foot for different types of housing. It is also possible to investigate the level of market attractiveness of built high rise housing blocks with large and small units, as well as other development types.
- It's also important to remember that a diversity of housing types provides housing for a diversity of life phases and incomes. A smaller home can work for singles and for seniors. Larger households may desire larger housing.
- Additionally, higher density housing can include a range of housing types and sizes; not all higher density housing creates "tiny" units. For example, the square footage of a townhome can be similar to a single-family home. Micro-units, however, have become a growing trend in the United States and the Bay Area that can provide lower cost, efficient housing.
18. Unbundling parking makes sense if the price of housing is lowered. But not if it means that the price of housing plus parking is increased. How is below market rate (BMR) housing pricing affected by unbundling parking?
- A. While working on other mobility programs and research, we have not specifically researched BMR home pricing as it relates to parking. We do know that unbundling parking – unlinking parking from a home and renting a space instead - helps residents take on parking costs when needed and avoid such costs when transit or other alternatives are readily available or better fits financially. Currently, unbundled parking is not a City policy. If

it becomes a supported policy, efforts could ensure that parking pricing makes spaces accessible to BMR owners and/or residents as well.

19. How much funding increase is needed for the Office of Transportation (OOT) to initiate and complete these multi-year plans? Why isn't OOT an active participant in these sessions?
  - A. The Office of Transportation is an active participant in the S/CAP Ad Hoc Committee Meetings, as well as the overall S/CAP work. OOT staff presented at the December 9, 2021 S/CAP Ad Hoc Committee meeting and have attended all of the previous meetings. The funding demand will be determined when Council adopts the final plans.
  
20. To put a thumb on the scale for the S/CAP, can Palo Alto put a price on carbon of \$100/ton on all projects and studies? This is the accepted price per ton for the social cost of carbon.
  - A. We are exploring how the City could incorporate a price on carbon into its studies, but the [S/CAP Impact Analysis](#) includes evaluation of a variety of emissions reduction options based on their costs per ton, and identified the most cost-effective alternatives.
  
21. How many of the city council and various committees and working groups do not live in single family homes?
  - A. The private homes of City Council members and City committee/working group volunteers is not something we track.

### **Suggestions and Comments from Participants**

- Safety is biggest barrier to more people biking. The increase in delivery trucks has made biking more dangerous.
  
- Stop building parking lots. We need to house people, not cars. Use the in-lieu fees to fund the Transportation Management Association (TMA) to reduce the need for parking. Please comment on this.
  
- The #1 barrier to mode shift (use active transportation >> cars) is safety (fear) of the bike infrastructure. The city has muscle memory of how to mode shift (see middle and high school commute behavior). It's a decade of advocacy and Safe Routes. We need to rebuild safe bike infrastructure planning and quick build development to meet the moment - we need 4X-5X the proposed staffing in the updated bike plan. Safety on El Camino Real intersections is a great starting point. If we had the safe bike infrastructure including the political will to remove parking along key right of ways, we could get the mode shift for the 50% of trips that are less than 5 miles.
  
- Use car parking spaces to provide more bike parking. One car space can park about 10 bikes! This makes biking easier than using a car.
  
- Parking for bikes is a great idea, but it needs to be safe and secure too.
  
- OOT top leadership need visibility.

- Nearby cities, notably San Jose and Mountain View, are way ahead in bike infrastructure. Sub-regional collaborations with CalTrans, Stanford and Menlo Park is a huge opportunity not to be missed.
- How about a “take your parent to School Day” to help the adults figure out how nice biking can be.
- The City needs to offer viable alternatives to driving. Promoting walking and biking over EV ownership helps congestion issues.
- E-cars are not a sustainability form of transportation – they are better than gas-powered cars, but the manufacturing process and infrastructure needed to support them are environmentally expensive. We need to move people to modes of transportation that are less GHG intensive than electric cars.
- The S/CAP needs to be brought into every major decision the City Council makes and not compartmentalized with the S/CAP Ad Hoc Committee.
- We need to quintuple down on the S/CAP.
- Staff Reports should include how a proposal will affect the S/CAP - positively or negatively.
- A healthy environment is critical for a long-term healthy economy. Short-term savings at the cost of climate change does not make good economic sense. How do we integrate that cost in our decision-making?
- The S/CAP is both climate and sustainability. Consider sustainability - including all types of pollution – when developing programs
- Thanks for the well thought out proposals, which make so much sense. The problem I see is that the city keeps taking so many actions which are opposite to these ideas. The city keeps spending my tax dollars to build more free parking, keeps opposing housing, and so forth. There seems to be a disconnect between what we know needs to be done, and what we are actually doing.
- The city should build mixed housing on the old Fry’s Electronics site.
- I’m glad to see the Housing Elements initiative being discussed here.
- Thank you to Councilmember Cormack for recognizing that mixed income housing is important, not just affordable housing! This issue is often not discussed, but really needs to be addressed.
- As someone who commutes IN to Palo Alto (with a 30-55 minute one-way drive) I would much rather live within city limits and bike to all of my destinations - but I do not qualify for low-income/affordable housing, and I definitely cannot afford the current market rates. Please consider how to provide opportunities for people in the middle-income bracket to become residents!

- Agree with what Vice Mayor Burt is saying about subsidized moderate/middle income housing, but we also need to consider that those in the higher income brackets are likely to purchase the housing unless it is protected for those in the moderate/middle income brackets.
- The gas-powered leaf blower ban is a quality-of-life issue as much as anything else, along with public health.
- We need a safe, quiet, and relaxing environment for cycling and walking – the noise and fumes from cars and gas-powered gardening equipment is unacceptable.
- Pervasive use of gasoline leaf blowers throughout Palo Alto’s residential neighborhoods discourages walking and bicycling as a means of transportation.
- I had an interesting conversation with a gardener as I admonished him about the gas blower. He asked me to lift the electric blower, and the weight was very heavy. He said battery life is terrible, and performance is weak. He said he had also had his electric blowers stolen. Ultimately, he indicated that owners do not reduce their requirements - like not demanding blowing. I ended up feeling like a rich person asking others to do my gardening. We envisioned new technology, like hydrogen, that could give the weight and performance consistent with gas, but that electric so far is not viable from an ergonomic standpoint. I learned so much from talking with the gardener as opposed to just admonishing. This in some respects is a class issue - and we need to be sensitive to this as we carve out our strategy.
- Marc Berman’s AB 1346 will help landscapers switch from gas powered to electric landscaping equipment which will reduce emissions.